THE Eunuch's Chariot
THE MAGAZINE OF FAITH TEMPLE FALL 1988

# The Legacy of James S. Tinney

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK/By Isaiah J. Poole

Faith Temple, like all gay churches, was born in protest and rebellion. The legacy of Dr. James S. Tinney, who guided Faith Temple from 1982 to his death June 12, 1988, is his leading Faith Temple and the gay Christian movement from confrontation to commitment to Christ.

While it was a divine call to evangelize the gay community which prompted Tinney to found Faith Temple, the church also had the mission of countering the homophobia and ignorance of other Christian churches, particularly in the black community.

Photo © Leigh Mosley

**Dr. James S. Tinney, 1942-1988**

One of the church's first public actions, in Sept. 1982, was a Sunday morning picket outside Temple Church of God in Christ in Northwest Washington, whose pastor, Bishop Samuel Kelsey, excommunicated Tinney from the church because of his homosexuality. Seventeen gay protesters carrying signs with slogans like, "Jesus Takes Away Sin, Not Sexuality" and "Jesus Loves Me; Why Don't You?" were confronted by irate church leaders. "God is going to get you for this," one of them told Tinney, "and I will be back to remind you of it when it happens."

Those who were embittered by the Christian

*Continued on page 2*

## *Personal Reflections*

# The Challenge to Minister, The Community's Challenge to Respond

*The following article is an excerpt of personal reflections of Dr. James S. Tinney on the history of Faith Temple, which is now celebrating its sixth year of ministry to the gay and lesbian community. and the spiritual challenges we face today.*

In 1982, when the Lord called me to begin Faith Temple, a predominately-black lesbian/gay church in the nation's capital, I did not know whether to expect immediate success or long-term growth. One thing I was convinced of, however: I knew that building and pastoring this congregation would be unlike any other ministerial experience I had ever had.

Many things could have fueled my fears if I had permitted them to. For instance, there was no model, no precedent, for this kind of church. Another black gay church had started in New

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# EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

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church's failure to accept and minister to lesbians and gay men as they are found in Faith Temple a way to take a stand against an oppressive institution. While there are many other reasons why many lesbians and gay men have worshipped at Faith Temple over the years, they all shared a rebellion against the typical rejection of gay people heard too often from the mouths of those who call themselves preaching "the good news."

Tinney, however, was blessed with the vision that it is not enough to say "God loves me, therefore I can love myself and I can make the world love me, too." Yes, it is true that God loves you, but the Bible also says to gay people just as it does to everyone else: "You belong to your father, the devil" (John 8:44, New International Version) and as a result, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)."

He acknowledged that such a teaching is not pleasant. Yet he also knew that God's Word was unmistakably clear: if we do not see and acknowledge our spiritual death, we cannot receive new life in Christ.

To say that God accepts us as gay people doesn't mean that we are, in fact, acceptable to God. Even after we "come out" and shed the guilt about our sexuality, there is a nagging emptiness, a void that we often try to fill with alcohol, drugs, sexual encounters, or material possessions.

Therein lies our need for Christ. John 3:16 says that God sent his son so that whoever believes in him "shall not perish" on account of sin. It goes without saying that if we do not believe in Jesus, we "shall perish" in our sin.

That is why Tinney led Faith Temple to be a vehicle not simply to promote "gay liberation" but this more important "spiritual liberation."

The need to educate and challenge the Christian church is as great today as it ever has been, but the need for salvation in the gay community is paramount. That salvation is not a mere acknowledgment that Jesus' existence 2,000 years ago is a historical fact; it is a belief that Jesus Christ is your personal lord and savior, that he bore your sins on the cross, and that if you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).

This is the most important thing that a church in the gay community can offer. It is simply not enough to walk into a bar and tell someone who is using drugs, alcohol or sex to escape from life that "God loves gay people and the churches who condemn you for being gay are wrong." That might make them feel better but it won't change their life. It won't give them the peace, the inner joy and sense of purpose that we all need, whether we realize it or not. It doesn't help them grapple with the fundamental issue of sin and the internal conflict sin causes in their lives.

What does change lives is accepting Jesus Christ as your personal savior. Jesus Christ gave his life on the cross, and then rose from the grave -- not to make a political or moral statement but to save your soul from hell and give you eternal life.

The most important thing James Tinney did in his life is hammer home to the gay community and to others that after all is said and done where we stand in Christ is what matters most.

That is certainly the most important thing James did in my life. About four years ago James led me on the road to a personal relationship with Christ. Nothing in my life has meant more to me than the joy of that relationship.

It is that joy, which I and many others came to know because of James Tinney's ministry, which Faith Temple will continue to extend to whosoever will as long as God permits.

**The Eunuch's Chariot**
Volume 5, Number 1
Published quarterly by FAITH TEMPLE
c/o 1313 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20005
Founder: Dr. James S. Tinney
Editor: Isaiah J. Poole

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"The Eunuch's Chariot" is inspired by Acts 8:26-40, the story of the Ethiopian eunuch who received the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because the Greek and Hebrew word translated in the Bible as "eunuch" was also used to refer to homosexuals, this story shows God's acceptance of gay people and his desire to bring gays and lesbians to salvation. For free literature explaining this, please write to the above address.

# FAITH TEMPLE IN ACTION

The members of Psalms are (rear, from left) Micheal Fitzgerald, Darren Buckner, Thomas Gleaton; (front, from left) Camille Griffin, Rodney McIlwain, Myaka Martin, Heriberto Ramos and Marcus Brown.

## 'Psalms' Sings Unto the Lord

On August 16, 1987, Faith Temple was blessed with its first Gospel singing group, "Psalms." Under the leadership of Camille Griffin, three inspiring young men felt the Holy Spirit moving in their hearts through song. Their first performance was during Faith Temple's 5th Anniversary in September, 1987.

Psalms' responsibility is to prepare the congregation to receive the word of God. By doing this, Psalms has put a message of hymns, psalms and spiritual songs in the heart of each member of the congregation.

During the first year, Psalms has participated in several outside engagements and services. Their first outside performance was at Simpson-Hamline Methodist Church in Northwest Washington during its revival service in early March. Greater Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church in Northeast Washington also requested the presence of Psalms during its Missionary Society's anniversary. On June 13, 1988, Psalms sang at the annual Inter-Faith Service during Gay Pride week.

The membership of Psalms is constantly growing. These members understand that they are here to serve the Lord and lead others to be saved.

On August 21, 1988, Psalms celebrated its first anniversary. The guest speaker was Reverend Timothy L Burno, Jr., associate minister of Second Baptist Church in Southwest Washington. Gable Johnson was Master of Ceremony. Other visitors were asked to be guest of Psalms during the anniversary ceremony.

## A Home to Call Our Own

Faith Temple's members this summer completed the first steps toward getting its own building by raising more than $10,000 to make the down payment on a purchase.

The church will be the first predominately black gay church in the country to own its own property once a purchase is completed, which is expected to take place before the end of the year.

Once Faith Temple moves into its new facility, the church plans to expand its ministerial programs. It also plans to make space in the building available to other organizations providing vital services to the gay community and the city as a whole.

The Building Fund still needs contributions. Some members of the church contributed as much as $1,000 to the fund; any generous gift would be appreciated. Make your check payable to Faith Temple and be sure to write "Building Fund" on the check. (See address and phone information on page 2.)

## Other Church News . . .

Faith Temple deacon Donald Burch, III, with the assistance of the Rev. Clifton McCray, conducted a 10-week workshop for persons who are HIV-positive. The workshop combined spiritual counseling with health and medical information. . . . One of the patches on the National AIDS quilt now going around the country is one commemorating our founder, Dr. James S. Tinney. More than a dozen church members and supporters helped sew the quilt, which features the church logo and refers to Dr. Tinney's favorite bible verse, Hebrews 11:1.

# Challege to Minister, Challenge to Respond

*Continued from page 1*

York City a few months earlier, but it struggled to survive and then folded, even though it enjoyed the support and affiliation of an organized denomination.

I had also been warned early on by a black Pentecostal minister that beginning a black gay church would be an "almost insurmountable task."

"It is bad enough just dealing with black people," the minister told me, "but when you deal with black gays, you are dealing with persons who suffer from 'double jeopardy,' and who exhibit all of the psychological conflicts and pathologies that dual discrimination causes."

What was I to make of this? Well, I discounted my fears, the solitary experience of the New York church, and my professional colleague's advice. After all, I believed God. So I went ahead, a brash young man, naive enough and trusting enough to believe that God would see us through to accomplish the task. And he has.

Nevertheless, some of my presuppositions and many of my "politically correct" ideas have undergone some revision in, to put it bluntly, the "school of hard knocks."

First, I have discovered that starting a gay church is a very different kind of experience from starting a non-gay church. For one thing, the gay community is largely hostile to religion in general, and gay media seldom give the kind of coverage to churches that they give to other gay organizations. For another thing, there is a transient nature about gay institutions that reflects the immaturity and lack of direction of the gay community as a community and the changing political climate of the dominant society.

Second, I have discovered that the political and historical reasons for a specifically-black gay church are not sufficient reasons for the existence of Faith Temple. Spiritual needs must take pre-eminence in a church. It takes something more than a cold historical fact or a harsh political reality to warm people's hearts, inspire their service, and to motivate them to action. It takes a supra-material, metaphysical, supernatural and supra-natural ideal. More than that, it takes the power of a personal, living God.

We are about transforming people's lives. But we can't bring them under the transforming power of Jesus Christ unless we first reach them. And we can't reach them, we can't enlist their total commitment and support, unless we offer them truth.

So we no longer say, "You ought to join our church because it is doing a good thing," or "because it is black and gay." But we say, you need to join Faith Temple because we are a church in every true sense of the word, and we offer you the only valid message of life and hope and peace for your world (the black community and the gay community) both in this world and the one hereafter.

You see, we know that there are those of us in the gay community who are as hungry for reality -- hungry for the gospel -- as anyone else. We have found the key, not only to reconciling faith and blackness, or faith and sexuality, but to all of life's problems.

Lastly, most of us rightly view a gay church as a self-evident kind of judgment upon the straight church's failure to include gay men and women and to develop a meaningful and realistic theology of sexuality. What we have not always been as eager to see is that a gay church has a distinctive opportunity and duty to point to our own gay sins as well.

Unfortunately, too often we wanted a gay church to affirm and "baptize" everything gay. But we can't afford such an easy approach. The truth is there is much that is wrong with us (and not just them).

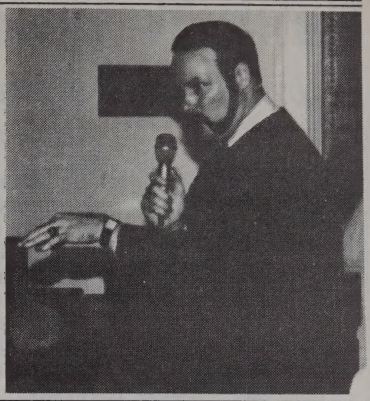
Some of this malfunctioning

Photo © Leigh Mosley

Dr. Tinney leads a prayer session at a Faith Temple service.

on our part is deliberate, a matter of choice, and sinful. As such, it needs to be named, described, condemned and left behind. But there is also malfunctioning among us that results, not so much from deliberate sin, but from maladies of the spirit and mind and emotions. These, too, need to undergo exposure, analysis, ministering and healing.

***Most of us rightly view a gay church as a self-evident judgement upon the straight church. What we haven't always been as eager to see is that a gay church has a duty to point out our own gay sins as well.***



In reality, what makes us as black people or as gay people truly human is not our surpassing wisdom, strength or goodness. We do not have to be better than others. What makes us human and normal is our partaking of the same weaknesses as others; but more importantly, our ability with God's help to make choices, take control of our lives, improve what we can, and allow God to heal and forgive and give us victory over those few things we cannot change.

In our community, to be specific, there exists a rampant rebelliousness that threatens to undermine our ability to work together, to compromise for the sake of others, to work well under any supervision, to function positively on the job, home or school. It is easy to understand how this has come about, for we experience a natural sense of rebellion against those who have denied our intrinsic selves their right of expression. But we dare not let this rebellion grow inside our spirits until it controls everything we do and say, so that we cannot get along with other races, others of a different gender, or others who can teach us. There is a desperate need in the gay community and in the women's community to learn that we will never (nor should we ever) become free from all restraint or free from responsibilities. Everyone has someone over them. Whether we like it or not, hierarchy is a principle of the universe.

Then, too, we have a peculiar habit of blaming everyone else but ourselves. We have accused others of "blaming the victim" for so long until we no longer understand that victims, like victimizers, both have areas in their lives that they need to remedy. Blaming others for everything that has happened to us actually weakens us and makes us powerless to improve anything about ourselves.

Racism and sexism and homophobia are not excuses for any of our actions whatsoever. So what if these evils exist? They always have and always will. We need to get on with more important issues -- yes, there are more important issues -- and do something constructive with our lives, rather than always bemoaning our plight. In a word, we need to grow up.

There is also a lot of patent dishonesty among us. Perhaps because of our hiding our sexual orientation and living "in the closet" so much, many of us have come to be deceitful and dishonest in other parts of our lives, not the least of which are our relationships, sexual and otherwise. We don't trust each other because we don't trust ourselves. There is very little integrity among us, and we excuse ourselves by saying that "they do it too, why shouldn't I?" Such rationalization is cowardly and sinful. Let us admit it so we can change it.

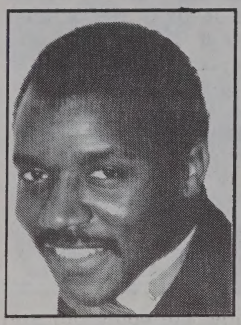
For many of us, sex is running our lives. We live for the next encounter. We have no worthwhile hobbies, no companions with whom sex shall never be permitted, no long-range plans, no ambition that is not related to furthering our sexual conquests. We will die and leave nothing behind for anyone to remember us except for our sexual orientation.

Most of us are not able to be committed to Christ or to anyone or anything. We have lived with such tentativeness, permitting our instincts and passions to govern our minds and overrule our values, until we are often like pathetic, spineless creatures with no will, no power, no self-control and no dedication to any pursuit that demands sacrifice. In fact, it is possible that there is a connection between our inability to become committed to a lover and our inability to sustain commitments to other goals, persons, or institutions.

A gay church has the unique opportunity and privilege and duty to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort" and bring healing and power to each person within its reach. Not only are we called to do it, the church is the only group on earth empowered by God to do it.

# Faith Temple is Changing Lives

## *Four members tell how the ministry helped them*



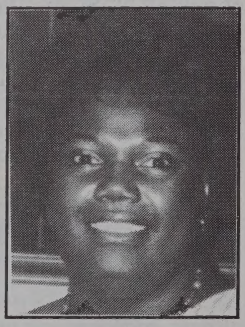
Faith Temple to me represents a place where I found freedom -- the freedom to worship a true and loving God, even though I am a homosexual.

I've been told and I've read over and over again that gay men and women cannot inherit the kingdom of God and that God hates homosexuals.

Because of Faith Temple and the teachings of Dr. Tinney, I've found the freedom to express my religious convictions. I now know that God loves me and has saved me regardless of my sexual orientation. I know that I am an heir to the kingdom, and that's a source of inspiration and freedom.

*-- Thomas Gleaton*

Since my attendance at Faith Temple the church has grown to mean a great deal to me. I've learned so much about the Bible and how to interpret it and apply it to my personal life. It's been a walk of faith as well as a guide to live by.



I've loved the fellowship, the services and the gathering of the saints after the service. I count it a joy to be involved in a church organization that offers so much quality -- quality of people, quality of word, and inspiration and guidance to grow and develop a daily ongoing relationship with the Lord. I thank God for the day I was led to Faith Temple.

*-- Camille Griffin*

I had the privilege of seeing Faith Temple emerge from a group that met regularly at Dr. Tinney's home. Today people have been saved and baptized as a result of Faith Temple's evangelism. It represents a very vital part of the gay community and the community at large.

This is one of the few churches where the Bible is the ultimate authority and standard.

For this and other reasons, Faith Temple represents the beginning of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit among gays and lesbians.

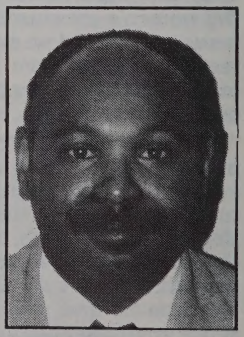
*-- Heriberto Ramos*

My decision to become a member of Faith Temple came after years of soul-searching.

Did I really want to be identified with a gay church organization? What would I say if a straight friend asked me which church I attend?

And then the questions came that really needed to be answered: Did I really believe in this God-thing? If so, does he really approve of my sexual orientation? And how much time, energy, money, etc. was I really willing to give to Faith Temple?

Finally, I opened my eyes to the light of the Lord beaming in my face. I realized that only God could save through Jesus Christ, and without him mankind would be lost. Then I knew I needed to be in a place where the gospel -- the good news -- was being preached and taught. I needed to be in a place where Romans 8:1 -- "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" -- was practiced as well as preached.



I believe that Faith Temple is one of the most important things the Lord is doing in the world today: preaching, teaching and showing his love, truth and justice for all who come unto him and rest in him (Matthew 11:28). As Jesus said, "My house shall be a house of prayer for all people." (Matthew 21:13, Mark 11:17, Luke 19:46).

*-- Michael Vanzant*

*Remembering Ron Jones*

# "The Lord loves me, too"

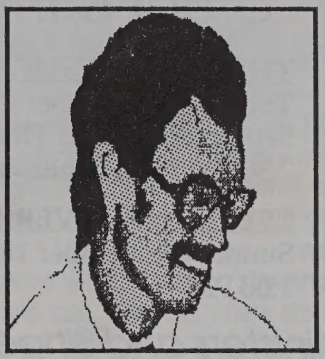
Ronald Louis Dodridge Jones, suffering with AIDS complications until his death Nov. 5, 1987, was nonetheless a triumphant man.

He spent the last months of his life telling as many people as would hear how he accepted Jesus Christ and how Christ accepted him as he was -- as a gay man. He urgently told others to do the same.

He also thanked God publicly for giving him victory over a life of compulsive promiscuity, even as he received assurance from God that he did not have to change or suppress his sexual orientation to get or keep his salvation.

While those who knew him well sensed his physical illness, that certainly was not reflected in his strong sprit and in his desire to be a testimony to God's greatness and love.

Ron, who served as corresponding secretary of Faith Temple, is remembered as an outstanding example of a gay man filled with the spirit of God and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In one of the last testimonies he gave at Faith Temple during a Sunday service, he told what Christ meant to him and how his life was changed. Here are excerpts from a tape recording of that service.



The Lord has worked in my life. For 15 years, I was in darkness, confusion and frustration, because I was a Christian, but I was gay. And that meant that wherever I'd go, they'd criticize me; they'd condemn me. But the Lord said, "Count your blessings, not your sins." The Lord said to put him first -- not sex, not cruising, but him.

I went home and tried to put it [my compulsive cruising] down. I suppressed it. I thought I would just try on my own effort. Yet in the church I was attending, someone said, "How come you're not married?" And Brother Jones had to run. What was I going to say to them?

I went home and I kneeled down to Jesus Christ. I didn't suppress it. I opened up and gave him control. He's the one who can change you, and no one else.

He taught me how to put this [my genitals] under subjection to this [my mind]. He told me I didn't need to run out into the street every night. He told me to live for him. He has come in and changed me. That's why I'm here; that's why I am a testimony. I'm going out and tell others how I've been changed, so they will no longer live in darkness.

It [homosexuality] is not a demon that somebody has. No; all this is hogwash.

You put the Lord first. You submit to him.

I'm living for him, telling everyone -- gay and straight -- that the Lord has empowered me. And I'm not stopping for anyone.

I don't care if I have to go to straight churches. I'm going to let them know that the Lord loves me, too. The Lord made me like he made everybody else. I put my pants on like everybody else -- one leg at a time.

The Lord has changed me and I'm going even further. And I hope you catch the vision.

# New Gay Fellowship Emphasizes Spirit

A relatively new network of gay churches held a conference this summer and proclaimed the need to raise gay Christians to a new level of "Spirit-filled living."

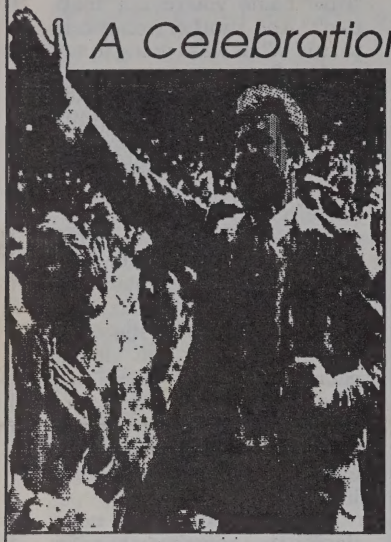
The Community Gospel Fellowship held its second annual conference in Dayton, Ohio. The fellowship, with churches in Ohio, Texas, Florida and a few other states, is led by persons from Charismatic/Pentecostal backgrounds who want to offer an alternative to Metropolitan Community Church-affiliated ministries in the gay community.

Faith Temple participated as an observer in the conference.

The ministers of CGF say that the gay community is hungry for churches where the presence of God is manifest through the movement of the Holy Spirit. Their services are characterized by joyous singing, spontaneous praise and Bible-based teaching.

Ministers from CGF and other gay Christian churches and fellowships planned a four-day "advance" at a Fort Worth, Texas campground in October.

*A Celebration of God's Great Faithfulness*



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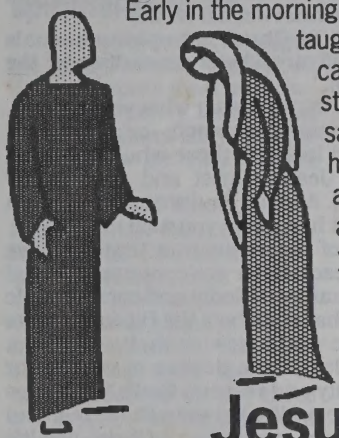
THE MAGAZINE OF FAITH TEMPLE ■ FALL 1989

# THE Eunuch's Chariot

WOMEN AND THE BIBLE



Early in the morning Jesus came again to the temple, and he sat down and taught, and the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery. "Now the law of Moses commanded us to stone such," they said. "What do you say about her?" Jesus said, "Let him who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Then they went away, one by one, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus looked up and said, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, Lord," she said. "Neither do I condemn you," Jesus said. "Go, and do not sin again."

– John 8:1-11. Condensed from the Readers Digest Bible

## Jesus: Liberator of Women

By Dr. James S. Tinney

Three stories in the Bible, all of which are about our Lord Jesus Christ and his encounters with women, depict the Savior positively affirming three very different women whose situations are also dissimilar.

They are found in John 4:4-29 (where we read about the Samaritan woman at the well), John 8:1-11 (about the woman caught in adultery), and Luke 10:33-42 (when Jesus visits the home of Mary and Martha). Here we see Jesus alone with a woman; Jesus and a woman in a predominantly-male setting; and Jesus in the home of two women together.

As I relate these stories, I also want to give recognition to a non-Christian feminist response that I was once given when I used these as examples of Jesus' positive attitude toward women.

In the first story (John 4:4-29), Jesus encounters a woman of the Samaritan race at a well, drawing water. He violates religious and national traditions in order to approach her, request a drink from her, and speak to her in intimate and extended conversation.

Rather than admitting the "revolutionary" nature of Jesus' encounter as told by John, my feminist acquaintance offered her own reasons for repudiating the story. The writer, she suggested, selected a story in which a woman was obviously unequal to Jesus racially, sexually and religiously (at least as perceived by the readers of that day). Furthermore, she said, the woman was cast in a demeaning role, performing a domestic chore of drawing water. And her recognition of Jesus' superior knowledge, in asking him to give her the explanation, simply continues to depict women in a state of dependency on men.

Aside from the very obvious heretical biases of this response, the refusal to acknowledge the divine character of Jesus, and the attempt to reduce him to a symbol of ordinary men, the

Continued on page 6

**HEALED FROM AIDS! See Page 8**

26th MCC Dec. 27/OIC Jan. 1 Dec.

# EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

## Women's rights and the offer of sonship

*So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.* -- Galatians 4:7

When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Galatian church in the first century AD, he was writing in a society that was highly oppressive to women.

That is why this particular passage of scripture held for that culture, and holds for ours, a revolutionary, liberationist message.

Galatia was a district in the Roman Empire. The Roman and Greek cultures shared a long-standing and deeply-entrenched pattern of treating women as second-class citizens.

As early as the 5th century BC, classical Greek civilization firmly relegated women, as well as slaves and children, to the household, or *oikos*. Male citizens, meanwhile, dominated the political and economic spheres. The married woman earned her dignity and respect from her management of the *oikos*.

The Roman state, with its principle of *patriapotestas* ("right of the father"), granted women even fewer rights than the Greek states, although they probably had greater personal freedom. The *patriapotestas* granted the male extensive rights, including that of life and death, over his wife.

It is in this climate that Paul writes about the relationships of men and women to God and the spiritual inheritance to which each are entitled.

In the secular cultural sphere in which Paul did his ministry, women had few if any property rights. That was in part because women themselves were viewed as property.

But Paul points to another sphere, a higher order in which every person who accepts Jesus Christ's offer of eternal life (John 3:16-18) is elevated to the highest and closest parent-child relationship that mankind acknowledged in that day, that of father and son.

In Galatians 3:26, Paul writes, "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." He goes on to write that "there is neither Jew nor Greek (an incredibly bold statement in that era because the enmity between Jews and Greeks during the first century AD rivaled the race hatred of pre-1960s America or today's South Africa), slave nor free (though much of the economic system then was built on the need for a class of persons to be viewed as property and, by implication, subhuman), male nor female (again, a blow against a society where women were viewed as the lesser of the sexes), for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (v. 28)"

Because all in Christ are spiritual equals before God, all are "heirs according to the promise (v. 29)."

In other words, no matter what your gender, race, class, sexual orientation, or other characteristic, God looks at those who have given their lives to Jesus Christ and sees "sons" (Galatians 4:7). And, as Paul writes, "since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."

The walls of discrimination that we have built around each other are contemptible and un-Godly. Equally un-Godly and contemptible is the notion that somehow the Bible supports a male-centric world view or that it does not speak to the legitimate desires of women for freedom, dignity and respect. God's Word does not tolerate inequality between the sexes, and Christians determined to live a Christ-like life must not either.

Before there was a political ideology called "feminism," there was The Word, challenging both men and women to accept the cleansing, healing and unity which comes from salvation through Jesus Christ.

**The Eunuch's Chariot**
Volume 6, Number 4
Published quarterly by FAITH TEMPLE
1313 New York Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005
Founder: Dr. James S. Tinney Editor: Isaiah J. Poole

**SERVICES**
Every Sunday at 1:00 PM
New York Avenue Presbyterian Church
Lincoln Chapel
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"The Eunuch's Chariot" is inspired by Acts 8:26-40, the story of the Ethiopian eunuch who received the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because the Greek and Hebrew word translated in the Bible as "eunuch" was also used to refer to homosexuals, this story shows God's acceptance of gay people and his desire to bring gays and lesbians to salvation. For free literature explaining this, please write to the above address. All Bible quotations are from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

# FAITH TEMPLE IN ACTION

## CELEBRATE NEW LIFE!

### Revival stresses spiritual renewal

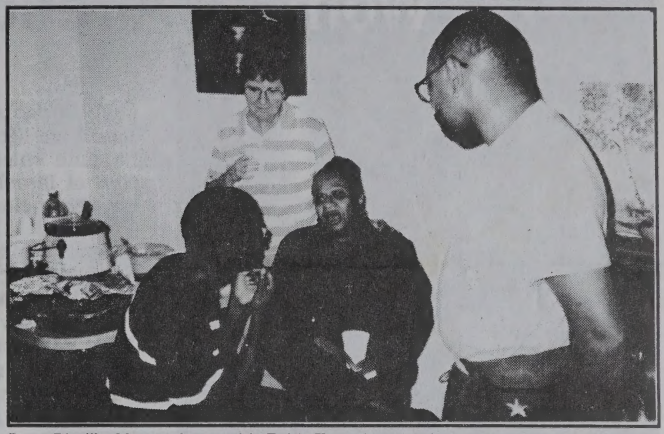
An openly-lesbian evangelist from Phoenix capped off Faith Temple's most successful revival yet by challenging gay and lesbian Christians to live the "new life" they received from Christ.

Rev. Phyllis Mann, a minister with the Casa de Cristo Evangelical Church in Phoenix, an independent church with a predominately gay congregation, sounded themes in an inspirational one-hour sermon that were similar to ones presented by the three weeknight ministers who spoke at the "Celebrate New Life" fall revival sponsored by Faith Temple in September. The revival and special Sunday appearance by Rev. Mann was in celebration of the church's seventh anniversary.

Faith Temple member Rev. James Fleming began the three nights of revival with a sermon which included a warning that gay people should take the Bible's injunction against sexual immorality seriously. "I don't care if you are a gay Christian, a straight Christian or a bi Christian, we are not to use our sexuality to be immoral," he said.

Rev. Candace Shultis of the Metropolitan Community Church of Washington spoke of the need for gay Christians to pattern their lives after Jesus Christ. And the Rev. Jerome Fowler, associate pastor of Greater St. Paul Baptist Church and pastoral advisor to the Inner City AIDS Network, said that even though Christians are still imperfect human beings, they should always "walk with God" and rejoice in that walk.

Rev. Mann was married for 35 years and was a minister in several evangelical and Pentecostal churches before she finally came to realize three years ago that God loved her and accepted her as a lesbian. Her message: don't let your sexuality or any other characteristic you have prevent you from accepting Jesus Christ as your savior and living a Christ-centered life..



Rev. Phyllis Mann chats with Faith Temple members at a get-together on the eve of the church's seventh anniversary service.

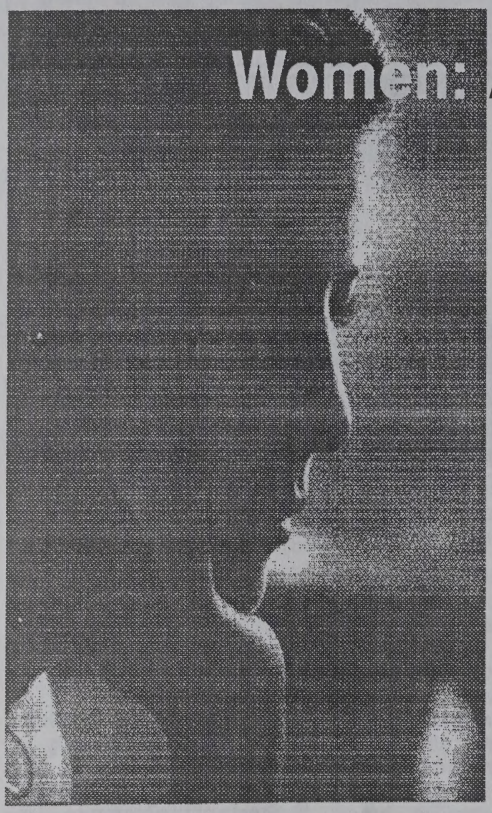
## Ministers Gather for AIDS Prayer Breakfast

More than 75 clergy and community leaders came together at a prayer breakfast hosted by Faith Temple to learn more about combatting AIDS, particularly in the black community.

The breakfast, co-sponsored by the Inner City AIDS Network and the Union of Black Episcopalians, was one of the key events of AIDS Awareness Week.

Speakers at the breakfast included Rev. Anthony J. Motley of First Rising Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Rev. Robert E. Steele of the Union of Black Episcopalians, and Ms. J. P. Smith of Baltimore and her son, Leroy Bias. Mr. Bias, 26, was diagnosed with AIDS in June 1988, and since that time both Ms. Smith and her son have decided to "go public" to help other families cope with the disease.

Ms. Smith said it was "sheer, blind faith" in God that helped her through a period during which doctors predicted Mr. Bias' imminent death. Mr. Bias, who appeared healthy at the breakfast, said that he recovered miraculously from a devastating bout with the disease and now, with faith in God, has gained a much more positive outlook on life which has helped to sustain him.



PONDERING INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

# Women: Already Included!

By the Rev. Lois O'Neal

Do we really need inclusive language?

Women are already included throughout scripture. John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world (everyone) that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever (everyone) believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

In the Old Testament, Moses and Aaron had a sister, Miriam, that was a prophetess, which means God spoke through her as well as Moses and Aaron (Exodus 15:20-21).

In Judges 4:4-5 we read where Deborah was a prophetess who organized a battle under God's guidance. The commander of the ten thousand men refused to go into battle without her. So she led the army into battle and the victory for winning that battle was credited to another woman, Jael, who drove a tent peg through an enemy leader's head as he slept. Deborah judged Israel for a span of 40 years (Judges 4 and 5).

A Canaanite (Gentile) prostitute, Rahab, risked her life and that of her family to hide two Israelite spies because she heard about the God of Israel drying up the Red Sea so the Israelites could cross. She believed in God (Joshua 2:11) and was allowed to continue to live in the midst of the Israelites. Scripture does not say she changed her profession and Matthew 1:5 shows her in the genealogy of Jesus.

In the New Testament, women traveled with Jesus as did men (Mark 15:40-41). Jesus taught women and men equally (Luke 10:38-42). It was women who supported Jesus financially (Luke 8:1-3). All four gospels show how women followed Jesus all the way throughout the crucifixion. They did not deny Him or run away (Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40-41, Luke 23:49, John 19:25).

It was the women who were first given the news of Jesus' resurrection and they were told to tell others, especially the twelve male leaders of the early church (Mat 28:5-8). The resurrected Christ Himself appeared first to a woman (Mat 28:9-10).

So we see a sample of how women were recognized and used by God as judges, warriors, leaders, caretakers, apostles and deacons. They were last at the cross, first at the sepulcher and the first to whom the risen Lord appeared.

So there is no need for women to feel so insecure that they have to change the Word to suit their needs or desires. If you change any of the Word you destroy the credibility of all the Word.

"God made man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them (Gen. 1:27)." Spiritually, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for we are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28)."

Jesus, the Son prayed in this manner: "Our Father, who art in Heaven." In that one statement He made us an equal heir and joint-heir with Him, sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:11-13).

Rev. Elder Lois O'Neal is a minister and evangelist with the Community Gospel Fellowship Church of Houston, Texas.

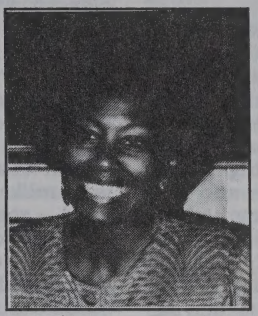
# Coming to Grips with 'Father God'

By the Rev. Myaka Martin

As a woman, and doubly so as a lesbian, I am always confronted with the issue of being woman-identified. It does not appear on the surface that this should be a difficult problem, but like many other lesbians, I have had my struggle with this issue.

I have heard men say that this "woman-identified" movement makes no sense. It sounds as if it should be an automatic process. After all, I am a woman; how much does it take?

But in a world where men rule, women often feel the need to band together to secure strength in numbers and identity. When women unite together and refer to themselves as woman-identified, this indicates an agreement in spirit with their sexual identity as well as political and cultural identity.



***What's wrong with redefining God in female terms?***

On the surface, this seems harmless. But the question is: are there reasons why a born-again Christian should not participate in this type of bonding?

I have discovered that there are some good things about this process and, as in most things, some bad.

Growing out of this movement is the idea that life is good if it is all female and defined in female terms. But how can this be defined as good when it denies the importance of men? Is this not the same complaint that women have expressed over the years?

Life cannot be anything positive when it eliminates fathers, brothers and male friends from our lives. You cannot remove the injustices that women have experienced and place them on men. When this is done by women who know the bitterness of oppression the good that is in the movement is lost.

I ask the question of lesbians who have accepted Christ as their savior because there are aspects of this movement that a born-again Christian cannot accept.

Imbedded in this idea is the concept that God the Father can be called "God our mother and father" or "God our heavenly parent." Nowhere in the Bible can we find scriptural reference to support this renaming.

When a movement feels it is so important to eliminate all male images from one's life and believes that the God of the Bible -- "God the Father" -- will accept such behavior, it is clearly not a movement that affirms Christianity. For if you are a Christian in the true sense of the word you know that our Father does not make mistakes nor does he make errors in judgement.

You cannot truly be a born-again Christian if you do not accept the Bible as the true and inspired word of God, and you cannot call yourself a true Christian if you deny the Trinity: the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. God the Father is obviously referred to as he, as well as the son, and the Holy Spirit is referred to as "himself" (See Romans 8:16).

Every lesbian, and particularly born-again women, at some time must settle this issue within themselves. I had to settle it within myself.

I found that identity is in God. To identify with a group is merely to seek acceptance from those involved, but when you acknowledge Christ as your savior you find the ultimate acceptance, the ultimate identity.

With any group or organization you must be good enough to attain certain levels of acceptance. God chooses you just where you are at that time; you do not have to become "good enough" brefore you can say "yes" to him.

When you accept Christ as your savior you begin a process of accepting yourself. You acknowledge that there are areas in your life that only God can change, that there is bitterness that only God can remove, that there is unforgiveness toward a parent or friend that only God can show you how to remove.

If you are seeking identity elsewhere, now is the time for you to turn to what is sure, and understand that God has given us our identity in him.

*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

--1 John 3:1 (NIV)

The Rev. Myaka Martin leads Faith Temple's evangelism team.

# Jesus: Liberator of Women

Continued from page 1

repudiation of this beautiful record could only be done by a person with "blinders."

What other kind of story could one expect in the first century AD? What other kind of encounter could one possibly have with a woman in public except in a marketplace or common meeting ground such as a watering place? Given the history of oppression -- and one must never judge a person out of their historical context -- the story is, indeed, all the more tradition-breaking.

The historical context affirms rather than repudiates the reality that Jesus is defying social customs *vis-a-vis* women.

***Jesus and his life as recorded in the gospels has done more to secure the liberation of women than many wish to admit.***

God's word is all-encompassing in its affirmation of women. It supports and sanctifies the housewife, even as it supports and sanctifies the unmarried woman. Wherever our Lord finds a human being, he finds and honors an individual with all their uniqueness and difference. In this sense, of course, he is far friendlier to all women than even the feminists who would divide womankind into the "politically correct" versus the "politically incorrect" -- in effect, creating not only a male-female division, but a female-female division as well.

Yet there is Jesus, defying the law of his time by daring to even talk to a woman. Not only does he speak, but he addresses her personally, and he speaks of the most serious matters reserved for male religious leaders alone. Remember, it was against the law for a rabbi to teach a Jewish woman anything, let alone teach a woman who was not a Jew.

One is reminded of the motion picture, "Yentl," which tells the story of a more modern Jewish woman who was forced to disguise her identity as a woman in order to enter the male preserve and learn about God's law.

In the second story selected here, Jesus defends a woman not only accused of adultery, but caught in the very act. Admittedly there is good reason to believe that this story was not in the original scriptures, since many of the oldest New Testament manuscripts omit John 7:53-8:11. But this does not negate our consideration of it. After all, if it was not originally penned by John, it was certainly so well regarded in early Christian tradition that it has been preserved despite questions about its origin.

But what if it is only fancy? What if the story is -- unlike every other story in God's inerrant word -- something that never really occurred? The question is appropriate. But the answer is that the story "rings true" with what we know about Jesus from so many other accounts. It is so like Jesus. Furthermore, given the historical resistance to women's equality, and to the equal personhood of so-called "sexually irregular" women, the story's presence and preservation in John is all the more convincing.

But my feminist acquaintance demurred -- not about the historicity of the account, but about its meaning. She said that in the Bible all women are cast as either virgins or prostitutes; therefore, this woman fulfills one of the two stereotypical roles expected of women.

Such generalization is patently untrue! It would be more accurate to say that the Bible depicts all kinds of women from virgins to prostitutes, from wives to concubines to single women, and from homemakers to mercantilists. Indeed, the Bible sometimes blurs the distinctions between virgins and prostitutes. For example, Jesus' genealogy includes not only the blessed Virgin Mary, but also Rahab the prostitute and Bathsheba the adulteress (See Matthew 1:1-11.)

Here we catch a glimpse of Jesus in the presence of a prostitute (not the only such account, given Luke 7:37-39). But this is not a customary meeting. Jesus not only addresses the woman, but he defends her; and he defends her against very religious Jewish men. Furthermore, he frees her from her accusers -- not a simple feat given two-against-the-many. Nor does he denigrate her for any sexual sin.

Finally, in our consideration we turn to the story of Mary and Martha as related in Luke 10:38-42. Again a feminist response: Here is the same old scenario with women in the kitchen, arguing amongst themselves, in the midst of a rational, reflective man. Why aren't the roles reversed, with Jesus preparing the meal?

On the surface, we might be inclined to ask the same questions -- if it were not, again, for the historical realities. But there is more here than feminists want to see. For one thing, when

do guests ever -- men or women, then or now -- prepare the meal? If anything, Jesus exalts the intellectual status of women. For he defends Mary precisely because she was not chosen to do kitchen chores. Instead, she has chosen learning over cooking. Obviously, this story demonstrates that Jesus respects the minds of women.

Without a doubt, it is appropriate to approach the subject of feminism with these perspectives in mind, since Jesus himself -- and his life as recorded in the gospels -- has done more to secure the liberation of women than many wish to admit.

Both the present Women's Rights Movement, and the Suffrage Movement before it, came into being primarily because of this book, the Bible. In every climate, wherever the message of this book and its Christ has been proclaimed by missionaries, and wherever people have recognized and received it as the very Word of God, there has resulted an inevitable cultural elevation of women.

On the other hand, it is also true that in every country where women are most oppressed, there is a non-Christian majority; there are the places where the Christian gospel has not been accepted. Rather than being the foe of women in an absolute and inevitable sense, Christianity has promoted women's interests and rights, and expanded their social roles.

Thus we can also say, that even in Christian countries" -- or nation-states in which Christians predominate culturally and politically -- even where examples of subordination continue that oppression is still not as great as it is in places unfriendly to Christianity.

This is not to say that Christians have not also sometimes treated women indifferently or oppressively. We know that many have, and some still do. This is true because Christians are not perfect. God is in the process of developing all of us. And the preaching of the gospel will not eradicate all the foes of women overnight; but it progressively nullifies oppression, even as it heals the oppressed.

Dr. James S. Tinney is the founder of Faith Temple. This is exerpted from a book on the feminist movement and other "crucial issues" Dr. Tinney was working on before his death in 1988. The book was never completed.

# 'I Don't Have Time to Debate God's Gender'

By Jakki Dennis

"For God so loved the world God gave God's only begotten child..."

Does it really make a difference if God is male, female or gender-neutral? Would we be more committed to the Christian life if Jesus was Jessica?

Unfortunately, if God and Jesus Christ fit our every physical ideal -- the right race, the right gender, and so on -- we would probably find new reasons why we could not commit ourselves to the Christian life.

When I consider what it means to be a Christian, I think of believers in Christ making every aspect of their lives Christ-like. When I think of that commitment and our responsibilities to other human beings, I really don't have enough time to debate the issue of gender.

Christians who love, care, share and deliver the truth to their fellow brothers and sisters don't have the time to debate petty issues such as the race, gender and sexual preference of God -- or anyone else.

The Bible is full of examples of women who were dedicated to God's will and played important roles in society despite the male-dominated religious culture they lived in. In the Old Testament, for example:

- Abigail, who helped save King David's life,
- Bathsheba, the mother of King Solomon,
- Deborah, a prophetess who led a successful battle by the Jewish nation over the Caananites,
- Esther, the queen who was able to save the life of many Jews.

There are many more: Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, Miriam, who led the Israelites in praising God, Hagar, Martha, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Jezebel, and so on.

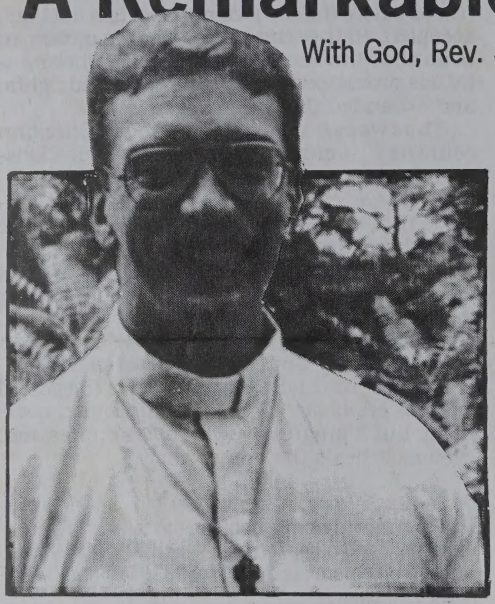
These women didn't wait to see if God was male or female. They went about their mission of saving men and women. They were able to perform miracles and they took responsibility for the poor. They led lives that were pleasing to God.

We need to emulate these women. We need to ask God to give us a clean heart and a right spirit: a spirit of love, of giving and of doing the work that needs to be done in God's behalf.

Jakki Dennis directs Faith Temple's publications ministry.

# 'A Remarkable Healing'

## With God, Rev. Steven Pieters claimed victory over AIDS



By the Rev. Steven Pieters

Do you believe in fairies?

I love to remind people about that part in "Peter Pan" where Tinkerbell is dying and Peter Pan turns to the audience and says, "Tinkerbell is dying because people don't believe in fairies, so if you clap your hands Tinkerbell will come back to life." For decades thousands of homophobic people have said, "Yes, I believe in fairies!"

Now is the time you've really got to believe in fairies, and this fairy believes in God.

This fairy has been greatly blessed by God. I have been given a remarkable healing.

From 1982 to 1986, I suffered from hepatitis, megalovirus, Epstein-Barr virus, pneumonia, shingles, herpes, fungal infections, candidiasis, Karposi's sarcoma, fourth-stage lymphoma, valley fever. I suffered under an experimental drug when my adrenal glands blew out. I suffered neuro-muscular damage and I went blind temporarily.

Then in 1986 they took me off the drugs, my cancers went into complete remission, and I have shown no evidence of disease. My immune system has returned to normal, and I am doing just fine!

So when I read Psalms 30 a couple of years ago, I thought, "My God, that psalm was written for me." It says, "O Lord, I cried out to you and you have healed me. O Lord, you have brought my soul up from the grave; you have kept me alive that I should not go into the pit. Sing praise to the Lord, you saints, and give thanks at the remembrance of God's holy name."

Last spring, I closed my file as a client of AIDS Project Los Angeles and became AIDS Project Los Angeles' first living alumnus. For the last two years I've been going around trying to create hope in the face of AIDS. There is such a crisis mentality; there is such fear and a mentality of pessimism that I have been intent on telling people, "Look, there are long term survivors. There are a growing number of people who are surviving AIDS."

Some people don't want to hear it. I was told by the executive director of one AIDS agency that I shouldn't be going around telling people about freak stories of healing, that it creates false hope.

But which is better? False hope or despair?

There is a growing remission rate among people with AIDS, and if you have the HIV infection, who's to say you will not be among the percentage that goes into remission? Who's to say you will not be among those who will live for a long, long time, fully alive, with HIV?

So it is possible to have hope. It is imperative to life to have hope. It is even theologically correct to have hope. And there is reason to have hope. Project INFORM published a paper a year or so ago saying that scientists and doctors now recognizing that AIDS is no longer being seen as an acute, terminal illness, but is instead a chronic, manageable disease. And with advances in medical treatment, eventually it will be like diabetes, where you can live with it for a long period of time, managing it with various combinations of drugs.

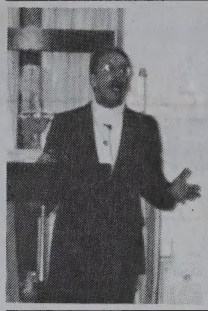
But there is still something getting in the way of our community. There is still a lot of fear around AIDS and HIV. So many people are running scared to death and scared of death. And because they are scared of death they are scared to live. A lot of people are going back into their closets. A lot of people are starting to be celibate because of this. A lot of people are isolating themselves.

There is a lot to be afraid of. I have experienced a lot of those fears myself. I remember in my first years of the illness back in 1982 and 1983 I was terrified of my own body and what my body was doing to me. I was terrified of being abandoned, and I was terrified of dying --

because I had not internalized the promises of my faith.

What does the Bible say about that? In Mark 5:36, Jesus said, "Fear not; only believe." In Matthew 14, Jesus said, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid."

In Matthew 17, Jesus said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." In Matthew 28, Jesus said, "Do not be afraid." Luke 12: "Do not be afraid." Matthew 10: "Therefore do not be afraid." Isaiah 40: "Lift up your voice and do not fear." Isaiah 41: "Do not fear for I am with you." Three hundred and sixty-five times in the Bible, it says do not be afraid. There seems to be a message here!



***Three hundred and sixty-five times in the Bible, it says do not be afraid. There seems to be a message here!***

So fear not; only believe. Believe what? Believe that God is with us, bringing us to the fullness of life, even in the face of AIDS. Believe that God loves us and wants us to have healthy, happy, full lives. Believe that there is no fear in love: In 1 John 4, God tells us that perfect love casts out all fear.

What that means to me is that we are called to translate that fear that we all have around the HIV virus into love, kindness, and service.

After the fear that I experienced upon initial diagnosis I remember feeling incredibly suicidal. I got over it, thank God. With the support of friends who supported me and loved me, they replaced my fear with love.

I also know what it's like to be afraid of dying. I was afraid of dying until my own near-death experience, and I discovered that what awaits us is perfect love and perfect peace, and I'm not scared of death anymore.

So again, I tell you: fear not, only believe.

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible says that fear is a self-centered emotion which reveals our unwillingness to accept the implications of God's love for us and God's call to us.

So if you already have AIDS, I tell you, do not fear, only believe that we are making progress all the time and that you have every right to be among the survivors of this disease.

If you love someone who is living with AIDS, fear not, only believe that you can be of service to them, that you can translate your own fear into love, and that you can face it; God gives us everything we need to face whatever we have to face in this world.

If you lose someone with AIDS, fear not, only believe that no one can take away the love and the memories that you have. And believe that the pain of your grief will heal. God gives us the strength and the power to go on living even in the face of grief.

I know that God's love casts out all fear. I am a person who has been living with AIDS for seven years, and I am doing fine. I've had a great life. I can still dance! God has turned my mourning into dancing. I have experienced tremendous healing.

Fear is real. But we have a choice on how to respond to the difficulties of life. We have a choice of how to respond to the fear that we experience. I choose, like Paul in Romans 5, to learn from the suffering of this life. Paul says suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us.

So I say with the psalmist, "Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing! Thou hast torn off my sackcloth and ashes, and have girded my soul with gladness, so that my soul may sing praise to thee and not be silent. O God, my God, I will praise thee forever and forever."

Rev. Pieters is the AIDS Ministry Director for the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. This is an excerpt of a sermon given before the Metropolitan Community Church of Washington on September 10, 1989.

## Books Available on AIDS

Three books by Dr. James S. Tinney, the founder of Faith Temple, have been reprinted and are now available. The books, "AIDS: God's Judgment on Homosexuals?" "Pastoral Care for the Person with AIDS," and "Homosexuality: Perspectives for Ministry" offer a progressive and Bible-based view of the issues gays and the church grapple with today. Each book is about 30 pages. "AIDS: God's Judgment" provides light and hope for those struggling with AIDS, and all three are particularly suited for ministers. To obtain a copy, simply send a contribution of $4 or more to Faith Temple. All three are available for a contribution of $10 or more.

# Do you feel you are in a SPIRITUAL PRISON?

Has condemnation and self-righteousness separated you from the loving God you once knew?

Do you wonder what happened to the words Jesus said, "Little children, love one another as I have loved you?"

We at Faith Temple would like the opportunity to show and express the love Jesus asked us to have for one another.

If you are looking for a loving and caring church family where you can worship in Spirit and in truth, look no further! Come -- be a part of a body of believers that worship a God who is alive and well in the hearts of "whosoever will."

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